

1 **CLAIMS**

2 1. A portable handheld computing device comprising:
3 a notification system to alert a user of an event regardless of whether the
4 handheld computing device is on or off; and
5 the notification system having an external notification mechanism that is
6 activated upon occurrence of the event and that remains active until the user
7 acknowledges the activated mechanism.

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9 2. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 1 wherein
10 the external notification mechanism comprises a light.

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12 3. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 1 wherein
13 the external notification mechanism comprises a flashing light.

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15 4. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 1 wherein
16 the external notification mechanism comprises an audio generator.

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18 5. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 1 wherein
19 the external notification mechanism comprises a vibration device.

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21 6. A portable handheld computing device comprising:
22 a processor;
23 a display;

1 an operating system executing on the processor to provide a graphical user
2 interface environment capable of presenting at least one graphical window on the
3 display;

4 at least one application running on the operating system; and
5 a notification system that is callable by the application to alert a user of an
6 event, the notification system having a sensory perceptible notification mechanism
7 that is activated as a result of the event to notify the user.

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9 7. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein
10 the notification mechanism comprises a light.

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12 8. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein
13 the notification mechanism comprises a dialog box presented on the display.

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15 9. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein
16 the notification mechanism comprises an audio generator.

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18 10. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein
19 the notification mechanism comprises a vibration device.

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21 11. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein
22 the notification system also has a deactivation mechanism to deactivate the
23 notification mechanism.

1 12. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein
2 the notification mechanism comprises a light emitting diode (LED) and the
3 notification system further comprises a button integrated with the LED to
4 deactivate the LED.

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6 13. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein
7 the notification system supports a graphical user interface which enables a user to
8 set notification options specifying how the notification mechanism is to operate.

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10 14. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 6 wherein:
11 the graphical user interface provided by the operating system has a taskbar
12 and the event relates to the application, and
13 the notification system places a taskbar annunciator in the taskbar, which
14 upon actuation, starts the application responsible for the event.

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16 15. A portable handheld computing device comprising:
17 a casing; and
18 a light emitting device mounted externally on the casing, the light emitting
19 device being activated upon occurrence of an event to notify a user.

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21 16. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15,
22 wherein the light emitting device comprises an LED.

1 17. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15,

2 wherein:

3 the casing has an upper surface; and

4 the light emitting device is mounted externally on the upper surface.

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6 18. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15,

7 wherein:

8 the casing has upper and lower surfaces, opposing front and back side
9 surfaces, and opposing end surfaces, the ends being dimensionally shorter than the
10 front and back side surfaces; and

11 the light emitting device is positioned on the upper surface and wraps
12 around to one of the end surfaces.

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14 19. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15,

15 wherein:

16 the casing comprises a base and a lid; and

17 the light emitting device is mounted externally on the lid.

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19 20. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15,

20 wherein:

21 the casing comprises a base and a lid that opens and closes relative to the
22 base, the lid having an upper surface and opposing end surfaces; and

23 the light emitting device is positioned on the upper surface of the lid and
24 wraps around to one of the end surfaces so that the light emitting device is visible
25 when the lid is opened or closed.

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2 21. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15, further
3 comprising a button mounted to the casing to deactivate the light emitting device.
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5 22. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15,
6 wherein the casing comprises a base and a lid, and further comprising a button
7 mounted to the lid to deactivate the light emitting device.
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9 23. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 15, further
10 comprising a button to deactivate the light emitting device, the button being
11 integrated with the light emitting device.
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13 24. A portable handheld computing device comprising:
14 an external notification mechanism that is activated to notify a user of an
15 event regardless of whether the handheld computing device is turned on or off;
16 a deactivation mechanism that enables a user to deactivate the notification
17 mechanism; and
18 the notification mechanism being configured to remain active until the user
19 deactivates the notification mechanism using the deactivate mechanism.
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21 25. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 24,
22 wherein the notification mechanism is a sensory perceptible device selected from a
23 group comprising a light, an audio generator, and a vibration device.
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1 26. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 24,
2 wherein the deactivation mechanism is a button mounted externally of the
3 handheld computing device.

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5 27. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 24,
6 wherein:

7 the notification mechanism comprises a light emitting diode (LED); and
8 the deactivation mechanism comprises a button, the button and the LED
9 being integrated as a single component.

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11 28. A portable handheld computing device as recited in claim 27,
12 wherein the integrated LED and button are mounted externally of the handheld
13 computing device.

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15 29. A notification system for a handheld computing device capable of
16 executing one or more applications, comprising:

17 a notification program callable by an application to schedule user
18 notification events;

19 a light emitting diode (LED) mounted externally of the handheld computing
20 device to visually alert a user when the event occurs, the LED being coupled to
21 receive power from a power supply of the handheld computing device so that the
22 LED can remain activated even when the handheld computing device is off; and

23 a deactivation button mounted externally of the handheld computing device
24 to deactivate the LED.

1 30. A notification system as recited in claim 29, wherein the LED and
2 button are integrated as a single component.

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4 31. A notification system as recited in claim 29, wherein the notification
5 program, in response to actuation of the deactivation button, sets a taskbar
6 annunciator on a display of the handheld computing device that is associated with
7 the application.

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9 32. A notification system as recited in claim 29, wherein the notification
10 program comprises:

11 a notification manager to manage one or more events, the notification
12 manager generating a command to set a time when the event is scheduled;

13 an alarm manager to receive the set time command from the notification
14 manager and to generate a set alarm command which informs a clock to set an
15 alarm at the time of the event; and

16 an interrupt manager to receive an interrupt from the clock when the time of
17 the event arrives and pass the interrupt to the notification manager so that the
18 notification manager can activate the LED.

1 33. In a portable handheld computing device, an application program
2 interface embodied on a computer-readable medium for creating a user notification
3 that activates at least one sensory perceptible notification mechanism, the
4 application program interface defining parameters comprising a time parameter
5 that specifies when the user notification should occur and a type parameter that
6 references a structure containing information specifying how the sensory
7 perceptible notification mechanism is to be activated.

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9 34. An application program interface as recited in claim 33, further
10 comprising a parameter that identifies an application resident on the handheld
11 computing device that is responsible for the user notification.

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13 35. An operating system for a portable handheld computing device,
14 embodied on a computer-readable medium, comprising an application program
15 interface as recited in claim 33.

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17 36. In a portable handheld computing device having an operating system
18 that provides a graphical user interface environment capable of presenting at least
19 one graphical window on a display and an external notification mechanism
20 comprising at least one of light and an alarm, a notification program executing on
21 the operating system and supporting a graphical user interface which enables a
22 user to set notification options specifying how the light and the alarm are to
23 operate to notify the user.

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1 37. A method for operating a handheld computing device comprising the
2 steps of:

3 scheduling an event; and
4 upon occurrence of the event, emitting a light that is visible externally of
5 the computing device.

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7 38. A method as recited in claim 37, further comprising the step of
8 blinking the light.

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10 39. A method as recited in claim 37, wherein the event pertains to an
11 application running on the handheld computing device, the method further
12 comprising the step of displaying an annunciator associated with the application.

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